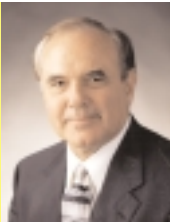




State Senator Robert Garton District 41



WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BUNGLED IDENTITY THEFT HIRING?

In recent weeks, we have learned that an Ohio man convicted in 1996 of stealing the identity of others to secure bank loans was hired last December by the O'Bannon Administration at \$95,000 per year to oversee the pension benefits program of more than 200,000 working and retired Indiana state and local employees.

Using the Social Security number and birth date of another Ohio man with a similar name and birth date, the felon sailed through a lackluster screening process and was hired for one of the highest-paying jobs in state government with the Public Employees Retirement Fund (PERF).

On Sept. 23, Gov. Frank O'Bannon released a report prepared at his direction by a Democrat lawyer in Indianapolis (at taxpayer expense) on the bungled hiring. Though the report left many questions unanswered, O'Bannon said PERF officials were to blame for poor screening. However, the governor's own staff has acknowledged that they, too, were involved in hiring the Ohio man.

For state government, this fiasco hopefully will result in positive changes, including more thorough background checking of job applicants (particularly of those who will have access to personal data) and less reliance upon casual information.

There also may be a lesson in this for us all. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in the U.S., costing the country several billion dollars a year. On average, victims spend 175 hours and \$808 to clear their names, states the FTC.

To lower your risk of becoming a victim of identity theft, Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter recommends following the steps outlined below.

- Keep items with personal information in a safe place.
- Don't carry your Social Security card with you.
- Destroy papers you don't need.
- Don't give out personal information unless you have initiated the contact and you know whom you are dealing with.
- Before revealing personal information, find out how it will be used and whether it will be shared with others.
- Remove mail from your mailbox promptly. Deposit outgoing mail in post office collection boxes -- not in your home mailbox.
- Put passwords on your credit cards, bank accounts and phone accounts.

For more information, call the attorney general's consumer protection office at 1-800-382-5516 or set your Web browser to www.IN.gov/attorneygeneral.

Garton represents District 41, which includes Bartholomew County and portions of Johnson and Shelby counties.

Straight from the Senate

Accessing Your State Government

State Information Center
Indiana Senate
Indianapolis Office
Secretary of State
Auditor
Superintendent of Public Instruction
U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar

Office of the Governor
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Indiana House of Representatives
Attorney General
Treasurer of the State
Federal Information Center
Indiana Department of Revenue

1-800-457-8283
1-800-382-9467
1-317-232-9400
1-317-232-6531
1-317-232-3300
1-317-232-6610
1-202-224-4814

Senator Robert Garton
Senate, State of Indiana
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2785



Be sure to visit my web site at:
<http://www.IN.gov/s41>

First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Indianapolis, IN
Permit No. 7767